

VZCZCXR08238
RR RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHCH #1075/01 3031429
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 291429Z OCT 08
FM AMEMBASSY CHISINAU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7251
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CHISINAU 001075

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/UMB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/14/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EU](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: MOLDOVA FM: SOLVING TRANSNISTRIA WOULD SPEED EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Classified By: Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: In an October 24 meeting with Ambassador, Foreign Minister Andrei Stratan underlined Moldova's European aspirations. The Ambassador noted that Moldova had to live up to European standards in democracy and development. Finding a settlement to the Transnistria problem would speed the process, as unresolved conflict formed a barrier to European integration. Stratan rejected the EU decision to lump Moldova together with other CIS states in the EU's "Eastern Partnership" approach and argued that Moldova should be in the Balkan package together with countries that enjoy genuine European prospects. Both interlocutors agreed that economic progress would attract Transnistrian citizens to want to join in a united Moldova.
End summary.

Important to Meet European Standards

¶12. (C) In an October 24 meeting FM Stratan focused on the European dimension of Moldova's foreign policy. The Ambassador told Stratan that while in London for the Wilton Park Conference the previous week, he had heard a lot of European support for Moldova. However, noted the Ambassador, two problems slowed Moldova's prospects for integration. One problem was demonstrating that Moldova was ready in democracy, media freedom, and economic development. The other problem was Transnistria.

¶13. (C) Stratan agreed, suggesting that Moldova had made too much genuine progress to tarnish its image now. Stratan promised Moldova would do its best to be correct in the pre-electoral period, the campaign and on election day.

Unsolved Transnistria Conflict Complicates the Picture

¶14. (C) The Ambassador suggested that the presence of Russian troops and Russian citizens in Transnistria could be a reason for greater EU caution. Russia was issuing passports to many people living in Transnistria, resulting in a growing number of Russian citizens in this region. There was a perception, continued the Ambassador, that Russia could use this population to claim Transnistria as an area of special interest, similar to what happened "in the Black Sea region." A sovereign Moldova doing the right

things on democratic development with no Russian presence and no Transnistria conflict would have an easier time with the European Union, the Ambassador said. Now, noted the Ambassador, the Europeans had to consider how their actions would affect their relations with Russia.

Moldova Prefers Balkan Package to Eastern Partnership

¶ 15. (C) Stratan complained that Moldova had been put in the EU's Eastern Partnership, which was associated with CIS countries. More appropriate, he suggested, would be putting Moldova into the Balkan package together with the countries of South-East Europe, like Croatia, that had a real chance at EU membership.

¶ 16. (C) Stratan noted that Romania supported Moldova's position. During Prime Minister Greceanii's visit to Bucharest earlier in the week, President Basescu asserted that Moldova should have been placed in the Balkans package. Stratan hoped that Basescu would have the courage to say this openly at the EU meeting in December in the presence of 26 presidents. In comments that suggested a warming of relations, Stratan noted that President Voronin had invited Basescu to come to Moldova soon. Though issues like citizenship and Romanian passports for Moldovan

CHISINAU 00001075 002 OF 003

citizens continued to complicate the bilateral relationship, Stratan said that Chisinau would do its best to prevent political problems from developing between Moldova and Romania.

The Russian Factor in the Equation

¶ 17. (C) The Ambassador noted that friends of Moldova wanted to see the Moldovan central government be able to exercise its authority over all of its territory. It would be impossible for the GOM to exercise its sovereignty while Russian troops were on its territory; hence, we sought the withdrawal of these forces.

¶ 18. (C) Stratan complained that Moldova did not yet have any clear signals from the European Union. Understanding that Moldova had no clear promise, the Russians were trying to prevent a settlement in order to keep Moldova dependent. Stratan argued that the EU should make a clear decision that Moldova was of interest and would be in the EU someday. Stratan speculated that the Europeans were afraid of spoiling their relations with Russia. If Moldova made progress, this would influence political events in Ukraine, and then, speculated Stratan, the Russians would do their best to create chaos in Ukraine.

Transnistria Wants European Butter with Their Bread

¶ 19. (C) The Foreign Minister noted that Russia could never offer Transnistria the material benefits that the EU would provide. Stratan thought Chisinau should try to attract Transnistria's citizens with social programs. Stratan suggested that after the elections Moldova would need to shift tactics, pursuing not

only 5-plus-2, but additionally other economic and social measures that would attract Transnistria towards reunification with Moldova. The Ambassador noted that the USG would do its part to bring the sides together; one good example was including a Transnistria roads segments in the MCC compact.

¶10. (C) Stratan suggested that Transnistria could best be attracted to reintegration through economic incentives.

He noted that European trade preferences were a genuine incentive Moldova had to offer Transnistria. A recent statement by the Transnistrian Chamber of Commerce commented with some jealousy that Moldova was benefiting more from EU preferences than Transnistria was. Now that legitimate Transnistrian businesses were honestly earning Euros, Stratan suggested that Transnistrians were developing a taste for "European butter on their bread."

"Three-Point Chaudhry Doctrine" for European Integration

¶11. (C) In summing up the key points of the meeting, the Ambassador outlined his three-point "Chaudhry Doctrine" for Moldova's European integration: (1) The GOM, USG and others should continue to make the case that Moldova should be in Europe; (2) the GOM should work on economic and political reform, building democratic institutions, while fighting corruption and trafficking; (3) we should all work to find a settlement of the Transnistria problem so that it would not be drag on Moldova's development and European integration.

Comment

¶12. (C) If the European Union held out a firmer promise to Moldova regarding eventual membership, Moldova could more easily resist Russian pressures. Such a promise would also assist in resolving the Transnistrian conflict, helping

CHISINAU 00001075 003 OF 003

convince Transnistrians that they had a better future as part of Moldova. Moldova is caught in a chicken and egg dilemma, as resolution of the Transnistria conflict would improve its European prospects, and progress towards EU membership would help resolve the conflict.

¶13. (C) Moldova's future is undecided. Will it become a modern European country which upholds EU standards of governance, respect for its citizens and support for business and economic growth, or will it fall under Russia's shadow and be content to do the minimum necessary to appease its former master? A significant increase in USG assistance and a promise of future EU membership would make it easy for Moldovans to undertake short-term, painful decisions for a clear long-term benefit.

CHAUDHRY